

## Defendant backs out of plea deal in Silverdale torture case

By Christopher Dunagan

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PORT ORCHARD —A last-minute change-of-mind by Brandon Pernell Gunn derailed his criminal sentencing Friday afternoon in the high-profile [torture case involving a 13-year-old](#) boy, who was allegedly beaten with a baseball bat, cut with a heated knife and forced to endure a nail driven through his hand.

Gunn, 27, indicated through his attorney, Michele Taylor, that he wished to withdraw [his guilty plea](#) and obtain a new lawyer.

Taylor spoke briefly in open court Friday to Kitsap County Superior Court Judge Anna Laurie, who appeared ready to hand down a sentence. A plea agreement worked out between defense and prosecuting attorneys could have resulted in a sentence of more than 30 years in prison.

Taylor said Gunn would need a new attorney before he could formally withdraw his guilty plea. Laurie said she would assign the case to the Office of Public Defense and would see the defendant in court again next Friday.

Gunn's action Friday also derailed the sentencing for his wife, Viviana Alma Gunn, 34, a co-defendant in the brutality.

Her attorney, Jeniece Lacross, said she needed at least two weeks, "so I can discuss with my client how she wants to proceed." Laurie scheduled a hearing in her case for Dec. 6.

The teenager, a relative who lived with the couple, was found by police on a bench at a Bremerton bus stop on Aug. 24. After he described his tale of brutality, he was taken to Harrison Medical Center for treatment of infected wounds. The Gunns were arrested later that day. The boy was later returned to his mother.

Both defendants pleaded guilty Nov. 8 to first-degree child assault, first-degree kidnapping, first-degree assault and two counts of second-degree assault. Other charges were dropped in exchange for the guilty pleas, but Friday's actions create new uncertainties in the case.



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